

THE CHAPBOOK

(A MONTHLY MISCELLANY)

No 17

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1920



The Younger French Poets

By F. S. Flint

One Shilling and
Sixpence Net

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(See also p. 3 of Cover)

THE YOUNGER FRENCH POETS

By F. S. FLINT

THE CHAPBOOK (A MONTHLY MISCELLANY)

No 17 / Volume 2 / November 1920

THE POETRY BOOKSHOP,
35, Devonshire Street, London, W.C.1

DADA = Hobby-Horse



Youth Departing

The Younger French Poets

THE DADA MOVEMENT.

IF you ask an intelligent Parisian for news of the younger French poets, the first, second or third word of his reply will probably be "Dada." Some rumour of the "Dada Movement" has already reached England. One or two of the literary weeklies have given a hint or a slight and slighting account of it. One newspaper, at least, has reproduced a "Dada poem," with an appropriate yell of derision. Here it is :

SUICIDE.

A b c d e f
g h i j k l
m n o p q r
s t u v w
x y z

LOUIS ARAGON—"Cannibale," No. 1.

But Paris is beginning to take "Dada" seriously, and everybody talks about it, angrily or otherwise. As one of its numerous reviews says :

"Madame Rachilde has written an article on DADA. She proves that you must not write articles about DADA.

"Monsieur Georges Courteline spoke of DADA for an hour at Comœdia. He said that you must not speak of DADA.

"Monsieur Fernand Divoire never says DADA. He says : the 'hobby-horse' party.

"IF YOU MUST SPEAK OF DADA YOU MUST SPEAK OF DADA.

"IF YOU MUST NOT SPEAK OF DADA YOU MUST STILL SPEAK OF DADA."

Effectively, Dada has assaulted Paris with gibe and insult and lunacy ; and Paris has been taken. M. André Gide contributes to the Dada review " Littérature," and his own review, " La Nouvelle Revue Française," has published a defence of Dada by the Dadaist, M. André Breton, and a " Reconnaissance à Dada," by its editor, M. Jacques Rivière, in addition to a benevolent article on the same subject by M. André Gide himself.

Dada was born in the Cabaret Voltaire, at Zurich, in 1916. Its father was M. Tristan Tzara, who some say is a Rumanian, some a Jew, some both. At any rate, he writes French incorrectly, when, that is, he is trying to write sense, or convincing nonsense, as in his numerous manifestoes. He is, he says, against manifestoes, on principle. Nevertheless, he writes them ; and he and the band of Dadaists are always manifesting in some way or other. Mr. Aldous Huxley told us in the March number of the CHAPBOOK about one of these performances, when M. Tristan Tzara recited " his onomatopœic poems to the accompaniment of an electric bell of eight-inch calibre." Onomatopœic is perhaps too kind a description. It does at least imply an attempt to convey something. M. Tzara does not wish to convey. His verse, good or bad, never says anything. It merely makes a noise. " Je hais le bon-sens," he has said :

" Dada means nothing . . .

" If I shout

Ideal, ideal, ideal,
Knowledge, knowledge, knowledge,
Boomboom, boomboom, boomboom,

I have set down exactly enough progress, law, morality and all the other fine qualities which so many very intelligent people have discussed in so many books, to come finally to this that, after all, each one has danced according to his own personal boomboom, and that so far as he is concerned his boomboom is right : satisfaction of a sickly curiosity ; private bell for inexplicable needs ; bath ; pecuniary difficulties ; stomach with repercussion on life. . . . If everybody is right, and if all pills are not Pink, let us try for once not to be right. People think they can explain rationally, by thought, what they write. But it is very relative. Thought is a fine thing for philosophy, but it is relative. Psychology is a dangerous sickness ; it puts to sleep the anti-real leanings of man and systematises the bourgeoisie. There is no last truth. Dialectic is an amusing machine that leads us (in a commonplace way) to opinions we should have held in any case. Do you think that by a minute refinement of logic you

have proved the truth and established the exactness of these opinions? . . . Measured by the scale of eternity, every action is vain. . . ." And so on.

There is a certain amount of commonplace truth in all this. Nietzsche had already made the same remark, in better language (not that language matters to M. Tzara), about dancing to one's own particular boomboom. Carlyle was certainly a stomach with a repercussion on life (Nietzsche had already said this too); and everybody, at some time or other, has made the reflection that the ratio of the works of man to eternity is equal to zero; but that does not drive us out with intent to tomahawk the decoration of our nullity. Nietzsche and M. Marinetti are the spiritual fathers of M. Tristan Tzara, although he denies M. Marinetti, and he would probably deny Nietzsche—who would also deny him. However, since "toutes les choses sont éternelles et vaines," as M. Henri de Régnier wrote, when he was a poet, M. Tzara preaches

"Dadaist disgust.

"Every product of disgust capable of becoming a negation of the family is *dada*; protest with fists of all one's being in destructive action: *dada*; knowledge of all the means rejected up to the present by the pudic sex of convenient compromise and politeness: *dada*; abolition of logic, dance of the impotent of creation (or to create): *dada*; of all hierarchy and social equation set up by our valets: *DADA*; every object, all objects, feelings and obscurities, the apparitions and precise shock of parallel lines, are weapons: *DADA*; abolition of the memory: *DADA*; abolition of archæology: *DADA*; abolition of the prophets: *DADA*; abolition of the future: *DADA*; belief absolute and unarguable in every god the immediate product of spontaneity: *DADA*; jump elegant and without prejudice from one harmony to the other sphere; trajectory of a word flung like a sonorous disc cry; to respect all individualities in their madness of the moment: serious, fearful, timid, ardent, vigorous, decided, enthusiastic; to peel one's church of every useless and heavy accessory; to spit out like a luminous cascade one's harsh or amorous thought, or to caress it—with the lively satisfaction that it is just the same—with the same intensity in the bush, pure of insects, for blood well-born, and gilded with bodies of archangels, of one's soul. Liberty: D A D A D A D A D A D A, howling of irritated colours, interweaving of contraries and of all the contradictions, of grotesques, of inconsequences: *LIFE*."

That is the original statement, translated literally, of the Dada philosophy,

as it appeared in No. 3 of M. Tzara's review "DADA." Its author's liberty is as illusory as the ideals he attacks ; and merely to pour out pell-mell and incoherently every oddment and figment of the brain, is at least as vain as to find some connecting thread for them and to make a decoration of life with them. If M. Tzara really held the opinions he professes, he would, like the M. Th. . . . Remy de Gourmont speaks of in "Le Deuxième Livre des Masques," never write at all. But M. Tzara does not hold any opinions. "I write this manifesto," he says, "to show that you can perform two opposing acts together, in one sole fresh respiration ; I am against action ; for continual contradiction for affirmation also, I am neither for nor against and I do not explain, for I hate good sense."

As becomes its inventor and as we shall see when we come to consider the "works" of the Dadaists, M. Tzara (with perhaps M. Francis Picabia) is the most determined of them all not to let too many glimmers of sense illumine his writings. The other Dadaists sometimes compound with their principles. In "Z₁" for March, 1920, M. Paul Dermée, its editor, has this further definition of Dada :

"What is Dada ?

"All is dada.

"Everyone has his dadas (hobby-horses).

"You worship your dadas, which you have made gods of.

"The dadaists know their dadas and laugh at them. It is their great superiority over you.

"Dada is not a literary school nor an æsthetic doctrine.

*
* *

"Dada is a fundamentally areligious attitude, analogous to that of the scientist with his eye glued to the microscope.

"Dada is irritated by those who write 'Art,' 'Beauty,' 'Truth,' with capital letters, and who make of them entities superior to man. Dada scoffs at capital-letterers atrociously.

"Dada, ruining the authority of constraints, tends to set free the natural play of our activities. Dada therefore leads to amorality and to the most spontaneous and consequently the least logical lyricism. This lyricism is expressed in a thousand ways in life.

"Dada scrapes from us the thick layer of filth deposited on us by the last few centuries.

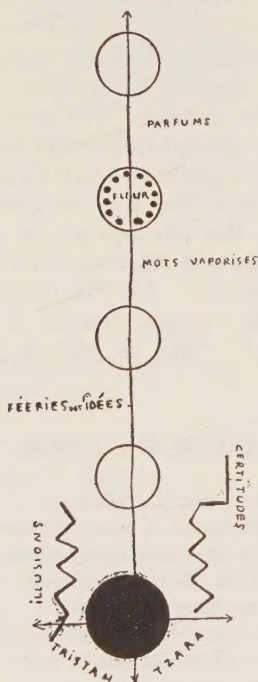
"Dada destroys and stops at that. Let Dada help us to make a complete

clearance, then each of us rebuild a modern house with central heating and everything to the drain, dadas of 1920."

It will be seen that Dada has been taken out of M. Tzara's hands and made to mean something. In fact, a perfectly definite doctrine has been formulated. It is, however, a doctrine that leaves its devotee free to talk

Portrait de TRISTAN TZARA

par
FRANCIS PICABIA



nonsense or to temper his nonsense with flashes of meaning, as he pleases. Anything and everything is Dada—a Zulu yell, for which M. Tzara shows a special fondness, simulated imbecility, an incoherent jumble of words, a mock-solemn absurdity, and occasionally poetry, if *ces Messieurs* will

permit me to say so. From a mass of reviews, all of the same tenour and tone, I cull the following examples.

Under the heading, "Douleur en cage dada à la nage," and above the signature "Tristan Tzara," in "Cannibale," No. 2, is pasted one of the little tickets of the Compagnie Générale des Omnibus de Paris, which you take at the stopping places to mark your place in the queue. Only that and nothing more.

Beneath this, M. Breton (André) prints and signs an extract from the telephone directory of all the subscribers named Breton.

In "Cannibale," No. 1, is the portrait of M. Tristan Tzara by M. Francis Picabia, reproduced above. M. Picabia is probably the artist who studied for six years in the *atelier* of Cormon and Humbert, and who afterwards painted landscapes in the manner of Sisley and Pissarro. For Guillaume Apollinaire's "Soirées de Paris" before the war, he painted coloured patterns much like jig-saw puzzles. He now writes incomprehensible Dada poems, or fierce gibes against the artists he dislikes, and draws queer arrangements of pulleys and cogwheels (to which he gives fantastic names), when he is not making jokes like the one called "La Sainte-Vierge," reproduced below, or like the photograph of a gollywog, published in "Cannibale," No. 1, as "Natures Mortes, Portrait de Cézanne, Portrait de Rembrandt, Portrait de Renoir." M. Picabia edits an occasional review, called "391 . . . revue en voyage, fondée à New York, imprimée à Barcelone, parue à Zurich." This is one of M. Picabia's poems from "Cannibale," No. 1.

CŒUR DE JESUS.

Jardi me cha vide
Plu cuses vi gent re
Jan este oses cine resses
Brûle ille mor gnée cui
Avo alon allu ndon
Cur emblés chi tite pord
Porch raient couro sotis chrét
Son terrés eff Tepri sa.

No prize is offered for the solution.

"DADApHone," No. 7, contains portraits of the Dadaists, most of them young, intelligent-looking men (they are, of course), with abundant hair



FRANCIS PICABIA

worn *à l'embusqué* (i.e., brushed away from the forehead, *loin du front*).
M. Picabia in this number says :

DADA smells of nothing, it is nothing, nothing, nothing.
It is like your hopes : nothing
like your paradise : nothing
like your idols : nothing
like your politicians : nothing
like your heroes : nothing
like your artists : nothing
like your religions : nothing

And M. Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes (who has nothing on his head),
says :

What is beautiful ? What is ugly ? What is great, strong, weak ? What is
Carpentier, Renan, Foch ? Don't know. What am I ? Don't know. Don't
know, don't know, don't know.

And M. André Breton publishes :

PIECE FAUSSE

Du vase en cristal de Bohème
Du vase en cris
Du vase en cris
Du vase en
En cristal
Du vase en cristal de Bohème
Bohème
Bohème
En cristal de Bohème
Bohème
Bohème
Bohème
Bohème
Hème hème oui Bohème
Du vase en cristal de Bo Bo
Du vase en cristal de Bohème
Aux bulles qu'enfant tu soufflais
Tu soufflais
Tu soufflais
Flais
Flais
Tu soufflais
Qu'enfant tu soufflais
Du vase en cristal de Bohème
Aux bulles qu'enfant tu soufflais
Tu soufflais
Tu soufflais
Oui qu'enfant tu soufflais
C'est là, c'est là tout le poème
Aube éphé
Aube éphé
Aube éphémère des reflets
Aube éphé
Aube éphé
Aube éphémère de reflets

"DADA 2" contains the following, by M. Pierre Albert-Birot, a specimen of whose art was published in the CHAPBOOK for October, 1919:

POUR DADA

[illegible]

M. Paul Eluard, who is the father of M. Paul Draule, edits a review called "Proverbe": whence these little jokes:

PSYCHOLOGIE ELECTRIQUE

Loi d'Ohm ou d'Homme

$$E = \frac{I}{R}$$

La force électromotrice d'un homme égale l'intensité de sa volonté divisée par la résistance opposée. M.R.

❄ ❄ ❄

Homère, ne mets plus tes doigts dans ton nez

* * *

391 ne contient pas d'arsenic. On peut le prendre en toute sécurité et en secret sans rien changer à ses habitudes.

* * *

ÇA VEUT DIRE CE QUE ÇA VEUT DIRE

ou
ÇA NE VEUT PAS DIRE CE QUE ÇA NE
VEUT PAS DIRE

❖ ❖ ❖

Je
m'appelle maintenant tu

TZARA, fou, vierge.

Tristan Tzara est un idiot vierge.
Francis PICABIA

Et il n'y aura jamais de faux Dada.
Paul ELUARD.

This may be called pulling our leg with a difference. We have had our leg pulled before by other humorists ; but the intention was more or less obvious. Here the only intention appears to be to bewilder or to convince you that the writers are lunatics (which they certainly are not). It has been suggested that the works of the Dadaists come within the domain of the psychiaters. But their authors know perfectly well what they are doing. They are amusing themselves at our expense, without, however, letting us share the joke, and with the ultimate object of discrediting all the works of the mind. As M. Gide said in his article on "Dada" : "What ! While our fields, our villages, our cathedrals have suffered so much, our language is to remain untouched ! It is important that the mind should not lag behind matter ; it has a right, it too, to some ruins. Dada will see to it."

And the Dadaists may not be amusing themselves so much after all. M. Gide seems to have seen that clearly, when at one of the public performances given by the Dadaists, at which he had had hopes of being amused, a band of stiff, starched and formal young men mounted the platform, and shouted out in chorus a string of insincere extravagances. Somebody in the audience called out, "Let's have some gestures," and everybody laughed ; for, says M. Gide, it appeared that, for fear of compromising themselves, none of them dared to move. No, the truth seems to be that, quite apart from the natural disgust of youth at finding the earth so much encumbered with the works of their forefathers—

And cursed be those who came before
And all our brilliant sayings said,

wrote John Davidson—there is more in the Dada movement than that. There is also a "stratégie littéraire."

* * *

M. André Breton's apology for Dada, published by "La Nouvelle Revue Française," runs in this wise. He finds himself uncomfortable within the limits of books and events, and calls for more air and for justice to be done to the arbitrary as a factor in the creation of a work or an idea. Youth attacks conventions; but is not for that reason ridiculous. Reflexion may not be, after all, a good counsellor. Innocence is praised, but only tolerated in a passive form, a contradiction that justifies scepticism. But such considerations are superfluous, and all reasoned discourse should be forbidden. What indeed is the utility of it all? Everything we look at is false, and the relative result of no more importance than the choice between tart and cherries after dinner. M. André Gide will agree that "measured by the scale of eternity all action is vain," and the gestures asked for are puerile. The obscurity of our words is constant. The guessing of the sense should be left to children. To read a book in order to know denotes a certain simplicity. The little even the best books teach us should turn us away from them. It is the thesis and not its expression that disappoints us. It is saddening to read these unilluminated phrases, to receive these objectless confidences, to experience each moment, through the fault of a chatterer, this impression of the already known. The poets who have recognised this fly hopeless from the intelligible. They know that their work has nothing to lose thereby. You can love a mad woman more than any other.

But no Dadaist aims at hermeticism. "There is nothing incomprehensible," said Lautréamont, and M. Paul Valéry's statement that the human mind seems to be so made that it cannot be incoherent with itself should be completed by the rider that it cannot be incoherent with others. The word inspiration was once in favour, and before to-day poets have abandoned themselves to the drift of their mind. Nearly all metaphors and doubtless all words were spontaneous creations. Let there be as little conscious intervention of the writer as is possible.

Dada is not a school. Their common exception to the artistic or moral rule gives them only a passing satisfaction. They know that, beyond, free play will be given to an irrepressible personal fantasy that will be more "dada" than the present movement. As M. J. E. Blanche wrote, "Dada will only continue to exist by ceasing to be."

So M. André Breton, who reasons and argues against reason. The article by M. Jacques Rivière, who is classically-minded, makes Dada respectable by identifying it as a new and logical eddy in the course of the main current of French literature. Perhaps his statement of the intentions

of the Dadaists is too benevolent. It would have that these are disinterested, and it makes no allowance for the common, human, vulgar desire just simply to show off. Although the Dada movement may be a logical development, it does not follow that its adherents were conscious that that was so when they began cutting their strange capers. The motives of the young when they start to revolutionise the world are rarely unmixed. M. Rivière's essay, however, is so interesting, that I summarise a part of its argument.

What pleases him, he says, in the Dada doctrine, is its frankness and also the light it throws on the present literary situation. During the last hundred years, a whole line of writers has looked upon literature as a mere exteriorisation of themselves. The Dadaists have shown where such an idea logically leads. The classical writers had no such notion. They used the means of which they found themselves the masters to illuminate and transfigure by the imagination the reality everyone saw. The nineteenth century witnessed a progressive weakening of the objective instinct. From the time of Romanticism onwards the writer felt that his creative power preceded his power of perception. He took God for his model, and Genesis as his object. Flaubert, in spite of his apparent objectivity, really pursued the shapeless phantoms of his own imagination. The Symbolists, especially, sought to get rid of every model, and to make of art nothing but a sort of deputy for their personality. Rimbaud's importance to the young men of to-day is due to the ridicule he cast on the idea that a work of art should represent, and to the calmness with which he set himself not to paint himself, but to descend body and soul into his poetry. Rimbaud's work is only a body he gave himself. He never *wrote*, in the sense given to that word until he came: he merely manifested himself. Literary cubism—Apollinaire, Max Jacob—is only a refinement on Symbolism; its endeavour is still self-exteriorisation. And the value of Dada is that it shows that, in realising oneself it is impossible to realise anything, and that the pure exteriorisation of oneself finally means the entire abdication of the writer. Dada, in what it has of shapeless, of negative and of external to art, represents, in its finality, the implicit dream of several generations of writers.

The consequences the Dadaists have drawn from the reigning principles are irresistible. These principles must, therefore, be changed. We must renounce subjectivism, effusion, pure creation, the transmigration of the ego, and that preterition of the object which has precipitated us into the void. The writer must make a new effort to understand; he must

ally himself once more with the scientist, if fertility is to return to him. Doubtless, he will always remain, unlike the scientist, an inventor, a beguiler. But he must no longer appear to be so or know himself as such. The unreal world it is his mission to evoke must take shape only from his application to reproduce the real, and artistic falsehood must in future be begotten only of his passion for truth.

M. Rivière's analysis seems sound, although his remedy is a somewhat doubtful one. It is useless to tell an artist that he must renounce this or that ; but it is legitimate to ask of him, if he wishes to communicate with his fellow-men, that he accept the conventions by which he will make himself intelligible. This the Dadaists—and they are not alone—refuse to do. To a philosophy of nihilism they add a psychology that is at least as false as any other. “ Nothing ” one of them has said, “ can compromise the integrity of the mind.” And that may be true. But you are not doing any homage to the integrity of the mind by putting into words every idea that passes through your head, and offering that as a true image of your mind. It is like skimming the scum off the refining cauldron and offering it as a sample of purity and sweetness. But let us consider the works of the Dadaists.

TRISTAN TZARA.

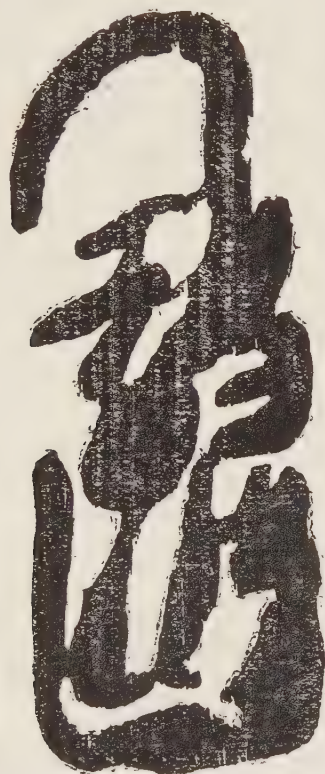
Whether it is because he is of foreign origin, or because, as the inventor of Dada, he feels called upon to be Dada to the death, M. Tzara's work is in style quite different from that of his fellow Dadas. It has a *cachet* of its own and its own species of unintelligibility. If, as I have tried to prove elsewhere, the characteristics of a work of art are personality, sincerity and style, then M. Tzara is an artist, for he has all these. His personality positively perspires from his pages ; his sincerity is such that he dumps his personality in front of the world without reserve or arrangement : he shoots it as a scavenger shoots rubbish ; and his style is strictly adequate. Of the Dada poets, he is, with M. Francis Picabia, the one whom you would least suspect of having the key of the backdoor in his

pocket. If M. Tzara's poetry expresses anything at all, it is his contempt for every tradition and institution. He has published "La Première Aventure Céleste de M. Antipyrine," with coloured woodcuts by M. Janco, and "Vingt-cinq poèmes," with ten woodcuts by H. Arp. The following poem is taken from the latter book :

pelamide

a e ou o youyouyou i e ou o
 youyouyou
 drrrrdrrrdrrrrrgrrrrrgrrrrrrrrrrr
 bits of green duration flutter
 in my room
 a e o i ii i e a ou ii ii belly
 shows the centre I want to take it
 ambran bran bran and restore
 centre of the four
 beng bong beng bang
 where are you going iiiiiiiupft
 engineer the ocean a o u ith
 o a u ith i o u ath a o u ith o u a ith
 the glow-worms among us
 among our entrails and our di-
 rections
 but the captain studies the indi-
 cations of the compass
 and the concentration of the colours
 becomes mad
 stork lithophany there are my
 memory and the ocarina in the
 chemist's
 horizontal sericulture of pel-
 agoscopic buildings
 the mad girl of the village hatches
 buffoons for the royal court
 the hospital becomes a canal
 and the canal becomes a violin
 on the violin there is a ship
 and on the ship the queen is
 among the emigrants for mexico

One of M. Arp's illustrations to these poems is reproduced here as a specimen of Dada pictural art.



H. ARP.

FRANCIS PICABIA.

If my identification of M. Picabia is correct, he was born at the beginning of 1878, and he cannot therefore be considered one of the younger French poets. It would, however, be discourteous to ignore him. He is the author of at least two poems, "Rateliers Platoniques, poème en deux chapitres," and "Unique Eunuque, avec un portrait de l'auteur par lui-même," the first in prose, the second in *vers libres*. M. Picabia's poetry is a kind of monologue into which he pours his spleen—which he often translates with . . . *le mot de Cambronne*. I will not pretend that I have read either of the works I have mentioned. There is certainly an intention of some kind behind them ; but, after you have read a few lines, you begin to have the feeling that Mark Twain must have had when, on his meeting with Bret Harte, the latter made a long speech to him that sounded eloquent but left him bewildered. M. Picabia can be appreciated in parts, if the total sense escapes you :

You must go to the circus
To have your poems read by clowns
The future does not exist although I feel better
Often sceptics in suffering
Triumph completely over superstitions
Great actions
People of good sense
Despise illuminated minds
Beneath a snow-storm in a car
The Peace Treaty I mean
Sits in the theatrical world
Above the table
The general strike makes love idiotic
In a brain Fine Arts
Like an office clerk philosopher
Accustomed on the highway
To see a pink mouth offer its lips
Up to
Etc., etc.

M. Tzara's preface offers no enlightenment, and M. Picabia's portrait of himself is merely two looped curves, terminated by arrow-heads, with the loop barbed.

PAUL ELUARD.

Whatever may be his antics—sincere, insincere, or merely youthful spoof—in the Dada reviews, M. Paul Eluard, in the books of poems he publishes, does endeavour to communicate with his readers. One of his plaquettes, “*Le Devoir et l’Inquiétude*,” was noticed in the *CHAPBOOK* last year. Since then he has published “*Les Animaux et leurs Hommes*.” This book has a preface in which M. Eluard asks for a return to honesty ; he would have us ascertain our own capabilities, and reject the artificial standards of beauty and ugliness invented by the over-refined generations of the past. “*Let us try*,” he says, “*and it is difficult, to remain absolutely pure. We shall then perceive all that binds us.*” He is apparently making an appeal for simplicity and the rejection of poetic diction. He wants a “*charming veritable language of common exchange between us.*” It is a very touching appeal, and if M. Eluard could persuade his friends to respond to it, I am sure the world would be the gainer by a little poetry, if it is only such simple notations as this from “*Les Animaux et leurs Hommes*” :

The fish, the swimmers, the boats
 Transform the water.
The water is soft and moves
 Only for that which touches it.

The fish advances
Like a finger in a glove ;
 The swimmer slowly dances,
 And the sail breathes.

But the soft water moves
For that which touches it,
For the fish, for the swimmer, for the boat,

Which it bears
And carries away.

There is not much in it, except that image of the fish advancing like a finger in a glove ; but the air is fresh in it, and there is nothing hectic or garish in the book it comes from.

ANDRÉ BRETON AND PHILIPPE SOUPAULT.

M. André Breton is the author of " Mont de Piété " (out of print) and M. Philippe Soupault of " Aquarium " and " Rose des Vents." They sign jointly a book of prose and verse called " Les Champs Magnétiques," on the flyleaf of which there is a promise of other works. M. Soupault suffers from the exhaustion and disillusionment of the young man who feverishly gobbles up his world, and asks himself wearily, " Is that all ? " His head is full of so much that is unassimilated and it all seems so little :

SUFFERING.

If you knew if you knew
the walls press in on me
My head becomes enormous
Where have the lines of my paper gone

I should like to stretch my arms out to
shake the Eiffel Tower and the Sacré-Cœur of
Montmartre

My ideas like microbes dance on my
meninges
to the rhythm of the exasperating clock
The crack of a revolver would be so
sweet a melody

In the praxinoscope of my cranium
the taxis
the tramways
the motor-busses
the river-steamboats try vainly to pass
each other
My books are about to explode
Then six sounding noises burst

Intran Liberté Presse *

The world is a big place : there are Dakar, Santiago, Melbourne, Java,

* The cry of the newspaper-sellers in Paris.

Nagasaki, San Francisco—others, still others ; but life is perhaps just as tasteless there as here :

Give me that lemonade and the last cigarette
I will return to Paris.

There is some hope of M. Soupault. He may grow out of his growing-pains and his melancholy. He has read Rimbaud, M. Blaise Cendrars, and, I suspect, the poems of M. Valéry Larbaud's multi-millionaire, Barnabooth. He should forget them.

I believe the poems in "Les Champs Magnétiques" are by M. André Breton. At least, I have identified several of them which have appeared in Dada reviews over M. Breton's signature. I have not much to say about M. Breton's poetry. He seems to be a clever young man ; but he is very incomprehensible :

CURTAINS

Mousetraps of the soul after the extinction of the
white radiator
meridian of the sacraments
Connecting-rod of the ship
Raft
Pretty stranded grass-wrack of every colour
Shivers on coming home in the evening
Two heads like a pair of scales

There may be some connecting-rod of sense in that sequence of images : it escapes me. "The idea of contradiction," M. Breton has said, "appears to me to be meaningless. From the unity of the body, people have been in too great a hurry to conclude in the unity of the mind, when we perhaps shelter several consciousnesses, and their vote is quite capable of tossing two *opposing* ideas about in us ("de mettre chez nous deux idées *opposées* en ballotage"). M. Breton's system seems to be to allow his opposing ideas to strangle one another and only their gasps to be heard. I do not wish to be unfair to him ; and I am in favour of every audacity. There is no audacity, however, in his method ; only a mournful resignation to the suggestion of the moment :

ETERNITY

Opening of sorrows one two one two
They are the toads the red flags
The saliva of flowers
Electrolysis the lovely dawn
Balloon of the smoke of the suburbs
Clods of earth screw-bag of sand
Dear tolerated child you blow
Never pursued mauve-colour light of shut up houses
The carpet is bordered with nests of dead leaves
Removals followed by village choirs
On the walls for holidays they hang
eyes playthings of the poor
Goodbye source of maladies
All the cries all and those who remain are liquid
For grown-ups the red order
House sun dance forgetting the veils of the fog
Summer moon
The lantern and the little grey tree that bears an
exotic name
O 133 these are the fingers of the ataxic the vines
of the fields
Biology teaches love
Weave lucid truths
They are binding my head with a bandage
Crime or suicide
The acetylene is a white pink
The frightful eyeglasses

LOUIS ARAGON.

M. Louis Aragon, the author of "Feu de Joie," gives you the impression that he might easily have written some pretty copies of verses, if he had not been seduced into other ways by the spirit of his time. Even so, he has not been able to keep out of his poems a certain dancing lilt, which

would have served to enliven the cadence of a more orthodox lyric. There is evidence, too, that he is capable of that suggestive association of words which is often the original element in a poem, but which, when used perversely, degenerates into punning. M. Aragon appears to have read Laforgue, and to have learned something from that poet ; but, whatever his gifts and acquirements, he has been badly served by the Dada philosophy. He tantalises you with half-said things :

MYSTICAL CHARLIE

The lift still went down breathlessly
and the staircase still went up
That lady does not hear the speeches
she is a fake
And I who was already thinking of making
love to her
Oh the clerk
so comical with his moustache and his
artificial eyebrows
He shouted when I pulled them
Strange
What do I see That noble foreign lady
Sir I am not a light woman
Hou isn't she ugly
Happily we
have pigskin bags
hard-wearing
This one
Twenty dollars
It holds a thousand
It's always the same system
No restraint
or logic
a bad theme

There might have been something in that adventure worth the telling. On the other hand, there might not. M. Aragon's poetry is like that. It might have been quite straightforward verse. On the other hand it might have been plain Dada. In actual fact, it is neither.

* * *

There are other works by other Dada poets : M. G. Ribemont-Dessaignes, M. Paul Dermée, M. Paulhan, M. Pierre Albert-Birot, M. Pierre Reverdy ; but I am not so fortunate as to possess them. A place was also due to the work of M. Blaise Cendrars, who is a precursor of the Dadaists ; but he is not a very young man, I believe. His " Du Monde Entier " may be read with M. André Salmon's " Prikaz " for the free expression of a modern emotion. M. Jean Cocteau, who has just published a large volume, " Poésies," belongs to the right of the left wing, of which the Dadaists are the extreme tip. His work was dealt with in the CHAPBOOK last year, and another year may safely pass before we return to it. He, too, is no longer very young, I think.

PAUL MORAND.

I have kept M. Paul Morand's work until the last, because, although it comes from the Dada publisher,* it is not strictly Dada work. M. Morand does say something ; and let it be added—in no spirit of gratitude for the relief—it is a poet speaking. It is a very modern poet, who lives in his own time, and sees the things that meet his eye, refusing none, and accepting all with youthful irony :

A FINE DAY

The morning
embanked within its strident but diminished hours
is already widening
and flowing
into the luminous afternoon.
The empty trams sing like sounding boxes.

* Au Sans Pareil, 37 Avenue Kléber, Paris.

The leaves fall
with a noise of burnt paper and
the Champs-Élysées, once stretched
between two horizons, bend at the Rond-Point
like a jujube.
A weak-willed macadam registers every stroll.

Six Australians in a warm cab
dip their legs into the void.

Glorious day.
The British Ambassador returns on foot from the
Quai d'Orsay.
Like England,
he is bounded below by gaiters of white chalk
and above
by a chimney-stack.
In order not to spoil the success of the day for him
the wounded are going to promise not to suffer
any more.

M. Morand's poetry presents both a picture and a criticism of the life of to-day—the swirl and fever of its anarchy, its flaunting baseness, its crawliness, its stupidity. His view of life is probably no different from that of the Dadas ; but while he expresses it, and thereby sharpens our sense of wrong, they fling a new confusion into the general anarchy, and merely add to our hopelessness. In one of his poems, M. Morand, after analysing the present state of humanity, describes the task of the poet :

A free and serious limning of one's thought,
a simple effusion of oneself
with more kindness and an entire good faith.
This is not a revolt
but a method
to enable us to endure and finally conquer
the anarchy that is coming,
and whence, thanks to us, if we are strong,
will spring a better state,
a just law of right and wrong,
as infallibly as the disorder

of the present hour
which has only the appearance of order
being but hatred and confusion.

It is a pity that the Dadas, who certainly have men of talent among them, have not so far shown as much generosity. M. Paul Morand is a poet to be watched. He is the author of "Lampes à Arc" and "Feuilles de Température."

TEXTS

pélamide

a e ou o youyouyou i e ou o
youyouyou
drrrrrdrrrrrdrrrrrgrrrrrgrrrrrrrrr
morceaux de durée verte voltigent
dans ma chambre
a e o i ii i e a ou ii ii ventre
montre le centre je veux le prendre
ambran bran bran et rendre
centre des quatre
beng bong beng bang
où vas-tu iiiiiiiupft
machiniste l'océan a o u ith
o a u ith i o u ath a o u ith o u a ith
les vers luisants parmi nous
parmi nos entrailles et nos di-
rections
mais le capitaine étudie les indi-
cations de la boussole
et la concentration des couleurs
devient folle
cigogne litophanie il y a ma
mémoire et l'ocarina dans la
pharmacie
sériciculture horizontale des bâ-
timents pélagoscopiques
la folle du village couve des
bouffons pour la cour royale
l'hôpital devient canal
et le canal devient violon
sur le violon il y a un navire
et sur le bâbord la reine est
parmi les émigrants pour mexico.

—Tristan TZARA,
from "Vingt-cinq Poèmes."

FRAGMENT

Il faut aller au cirque
Pour faire lire ses poèmes par des clowns
L'avenir n'existe pas quoique j'aïlle mieux
Souvent les sceptiques dans la souffrance
Triomphent complètement des superstitions
Grandes actions
Les gens de bon sens
Méprisent les consciences illuminées
Sous une tempête de neige en auto
Le Traité de Paix que je veux dire
Siège dans le monde de théâtre
Par-dessus la table
La grève générale rend idiot l'amour
Dans un cerveau Beaux-Arts
Comme un employé de bureau philosophe
Habitué sur la place publique
A voir une bouche rose tendre ses lèvres
Jusqu'à

—Francis PICABIA,
from "Unique Eunuque."

POISSON

Les poissons, les nageurs, les bateaux
Transforment l'eau.
L'eau est douce et ne bouge
Que pour ce qui la touche.

Le poisson avance
Comme un doigt dans un gant,
Le nageur danse lentement
Et la voile respire.

Mais l'eau douce bouge
Pour ce qui la touche,
Pour le poisson, pour le nageur, pour le bateau

Qu'elle porte
Et qu'elle emporte.

—Paul ELUARD,
from "Les Animaux et leurs Hommes."

SOUFFRANCE

Si tu savais si tu savais
les murs se resserrent
Ma tête devient énorme
Où sont donc parties les lignes de mon papier

Je voudrais allonger mes bras pour
secouer la Tour Eiffel et le Sacré-Cœur de
Montmartre

Mes idées comme des microbes dansent sur
mes méninges
au rythme de l'exaspérante pendule
Un coup de revolver serait une si douce melodie

Dans le praxinoscope de mon crâne
les taxis
les tramways
les autobus
les bateaux-mouches cherchent en vain à se
dépasser
Mes livres vont exploser
Puis six coups sonores s'abattent

Intran Liberté Presse

—Philippe SOUPAULT,
from "Rose des Vents."

RIDEAUX

Souricières de l'âme après extinction du calorifère blanc
méridien des sacrements
Bielle du navire
Radeau
Jolies algues échouées il y en a de toutes couleurs
Frissons en rentrant le soir
Deux têtes comme les plateaux d'une balance

L'ETERNITE

Ouverture des chagrins une deux une deux
Ce sont les crapauds les drapeaux rouges
La salive des fleurs
L'électrolyse la belle aurore
Ballon des fumées des faubourgs
Les mottes de terre cornet de sable
Cher enfant toléré tu souffles
Jamais poursuivi le mauve lumière des maisons closes
Le tapis est bordé de nids de feuilles mortes
Les déménagements suivis des orphéons villageois
Sur les murs pour les jours de fête on accroche des
yeux joujoux des pauvres
Adieu source des maladies
Tous les cris tous et ceux qui restent sont liquides
Pour grandes personnes l'ordre rouge
Maison soleil danse oubliant les voiles du brouillard
Été lune
La lanterne et le petit arbre gris qui porte un nom
exotique
O 133 ce sont les doigts des ataxiques les vignes des
champs
La biologie enseigne l'amour
Tissez les lucides vérités
On entoure ma tête d'un bandage
Crime ou suicide
L'acétylène est un œillet blanc
Les affreux lorgnons

—André BRETON,
from "Les Champs Magnétiques."

CHARLOT MYSTIQUE

L'ascenseur descendait toujours à perdre
haleine
et l'escalier montait toujours
Cette dame n'entend pas les discours
elle est postiche
Moi qui déjà songeais à lui parler d'amour
Oh le commis
si comique avec sa moustache et ses sourcils
artificiels
Il a crié quand je les ai tirés
Etrange
Qu'ai-je vu Cette noble étrangère
Monsieur je ne suis pas une femme légère
Hou la laide
Par bonheur nous
avons des valises en peau de porc
à toute épreuve
Celle-ci
Vingt dollars
Elle en contient mille
C'est toujours le même système
Pas de mesure
ni de logique
mauvais thème

—Louis ARAGON,
from "Feu de Joie."

UN BEAU JOUR

La matinée
encaissée dans ses heures stridentes mais réduites
déjà s'évase,
s'écoule,
dans l'après-midi lumineux.
Les tramways vides chantent comme des boîtes sonores.

Les feuilles tombent
avec un fracas de papier brûlé et
les Champs-Élysées, jadis tendus
entre deux horizons, fléchissent au Rond-Point,
comme un jube.
Un macadam sans volonté enregistre toutes les promenades.

Six Australiens trempent dans un fiacre tiède,
les jambes dans le vide.

Glorious day.
L'Ambassadeur britannique revient à pied du Quai d'Orsay.
Comme l'Angleterre,
il est limité en bas par des guêtres de craie blanche
et en haut,
par un tuyau de cheminée.
Pour ne pas lui gâter le succès du jour,
les blessés vont promettre de ne plus souffrir.

Fragment from UNE PLAQUE INDICATRICE

Un libre et sérieux dessin de sa pensée,
une simple effusion de soi-même,
avec plus de bonté et une entière bonne foi.
Ceci n'est pas une mutinerie,
mais une méthode
pour pouvoir durer et vaincre enfin
l'anarchie qui va venir,
et, d'où, grace à nous, si nous sommes forts,
renaitra un état meilleur,
un statut juste de la conscience,
aussi immanquablement que le désordre
de l'heure que voici
qui n'a de l'ordre que l'apparence,
n'étant que haine et confusion. . . .

—Paul MORAND,
from "Lampes à Arc."

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